Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable with Major General Peter Fuller, Deputy Commander for Programs, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan Via Teleconference From Afghanistan Subject: Providing Logistical Support to the Afghan National Security Forces Time: 10:32 a.m. EDT Date: Wednesday, September 7, 2011

(Note: Please refer to www.dod.mil for more information.)

PETTY OFFICER WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Wednesday, September 7th, 2011. My name is Petty Officer William Selby with the Office of the Secretary of Defense Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating the call this morning -- or this afternoon or evening, if you're over in Afghanistan.

Today, we are honored to have as our guest Major General Peter Fuller, deputy commander for programs, NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, and he will be discussing the processes used at NATO Training Mission Afghanistan that provide stewardship and accountability for contracts, funding, equipment and infrastructure provided to the Afghan National Security Forces.

A note to the bloggers on the line: Please remember to clearly state your name and blog or organization in advance of your question and respect the major general's time and keep your questions succinct and to the point. Please remember to place your phone on mute if you are not asking a question. Somebody else just joined us, before we go any further.

Q: Yeah, it's Troy Steward from (name of website deleted.)

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Roger that, Troy. Thank you very much. And Major General Fuller, the floor is yours if you have an opening statement.

MAJOR GENERAL PETER FULLER: Sure. First of all, I would like to thank everybody for joining us today. What I'd like to do is just first give you a reference as to what I do in this organization and how this all fits together. So as you heard, I'm the deputy commander for the NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, and what that means is if you -- we have three generals that are in charge of what I call the pillars.

The main pillars are building an army, building an air force and building a police force. And those three pillars generate the requirements, and then the team that I'm responsible for procures the equipment, conducts -- or -- well, we procure all the equipment. We do all the infrastructure builds. We're setting up the medical systems associated with both the army and the police force.

The air force, in my opinion, is technically part of the army. It gets recruited out of the army; it gets its supplies out of the army; it gets its medical out of the army. And then at the very end, they become a pilot and instead of having an army air corps, they have an air force. My team is responsible for the funding associated with all of these activities.

We do all the communications -- so both tactical communications and setting up the infrastructure between all the facilities so they can have an Internet type of capability to tie all the corps together back to the ministry of defense or to the ministry of interior from the police stations.

We are also responsible for all of the analysis that goes into what exactly is the requirement once it's generated, in terms of equipment. We look at what they call the tashkils, so we generate the tashkils at our level. And my team is also responsible for all the literacy training that is done throughout the Afghan security forces, both the army and the police.

So that's the context in which I'm operating. Got a great team. They're spread, actually, out all over the country because we are providing stewardship and mentorship in a lot of different areas. And if I could just kind of frame one other thing, the three words I use around here a lot are, we're trying to be Afghan-right, we're trying to be Afghan-first, and now, we're trying to be Afghan-like.

And let me hit the first one: Afghan-right. We recognize that the Afghan army and police force are not going to be something similar to what the U.S. Army might have or some other Western country, so we're looking at what capabilities they really need to have, meaning do they need to be equipped to be an expeditionary type of army?

And an example would be, in our Army, we have these mobile kitchens so we can go and set up a mobile kitchen until we can have a contractor potentially come in and provide us our food. Well, they operate out of -- their corps are really regionally based and they stay in their region and fight in their region, so they go back and forth to their bases. Do we need to give them that type of capability?

Another example is in the infrastructure builds. Initially, when we started doing infrastructure builds for the Afghan army and the Afghan police, we thought of Western standards because we were using our Corps of Engineers with the Air Force and the Army and they have established standards that they follow. So in light of that, they put air-conditioning in all the buildings. They gave us Western-style

toilets. They gave us really nice, propane-equipped kitchens, and they gave us really nice bathrooms.

Well, the bathrooms had pedestal, porcelain sinks because that's, you know, a standard you would see in a U.S. side. But they like to -- the Afghans like to wash their feet before they do prayers. So they were trying to perch on the edge of a porcelain sink and it didn't work out very well, so now we've changed it to Afghan-right. Give them -- don't give them air-conditioning in all the buildings, give them ceiling fans and the ability to open windows.

And we've seen a potential reduction between 100 (million dollars) and $150 million worth of fuel associated with all the generators that had to be powered up before and run to provide all that electricity. We have changed out the latrines. We've given them both a wood-burning stove outside because they have a lot of wood that they burn here in this country, and a propane stove inside. So if they don't have propane, they can still burn -- or cook their food on these wood burners.

Afghan-first. We are trying to generate industries here in Afghanistan that will allow them to be sustainable. And an example is we're going to have 352,000 Afghans in the security force -- that's 195,000 in the army and 157,000 in the police force. Well, in light of that, we're not buying any of the uniforms from the States anymore.

We're having an Afghan company -- or actually, several Afghan companies -- make the uniforms, make the boots, make all the equipment items that they need. It's a light-industry capability, though it is Afghan-owned, Afghan-operated.

And now we're getting a much lower price because the price we had to pay for in the United States was one that had a shipping cost associated with it.

We have the Berry Amendment requirements in the United States, so we had requirements that it had to be all U.S.-manufactured and the end result was it was almost twice as expensive to have a uniform and boots made in the United States as it was here in Afghanistan. So we've gone the other direction and have them built here, or manufactured here.

Afghan-like is trying to have the Afghans understand this is our national treasure -- and I'm speaking from an American perspective because we are funding 92 percent of the operation, in terms of the building of the Afghan security forces. So in terms of Afghan-like, we are articulating when we give you a piece of property and you identify the standard in which you're going to maintain it, if you do not maintain it we are going to take it away from you until you demonstrate you are going to maintain property appropriately.

So one thing on vehicles is if we see they're not maintaining them appropriately, we withdraw their fuel allocation associated with the vehicles that they're not maintaining appropriately. Actually, in some cases, they have battle-lost vehicles and we're trying to incentivize

them to turn in the vehicles and we're saying, I'm not giving you fuel associated with that vehicle because you're not driving it.

So if you turn the vehicle in, we'll give you another one. You have to follow your processes to turn it in and then you will get your fuel back. So we're trying to do several things, as I said, Build what's appropriate for Afghanistan, use Afghanistan companies as much as possible and then ensure that as they establish standards for accountability and stewardship, that they follow them. And so that's the first, right and like.

So in light of all those opening points, I'd like to open it up to you and hear what your questions are.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much, sir. And the first blogger on the line was Anand (sp). So Anand, you can go ahead with your question. Q: I'll ask it at the end of the call. So others can go first.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: All right. Dale?

Q: Good morning, sir. This is Dale Kissinger from militaryavenue.com. I read your blog in advance. Thank you very much for that reading. That was great, and it did bring up a question. In one paragraph, you said it's a constant challenge to ensure that every penny of these funds goes towards the betterment of the ANSF. What are those challenges? What is challenging you in spending the $10 billion or so that are listed in that paragraph?

GEN. FULLER: There are several things. The worst part of my job, I tell people, is that I'm building a bureaucracy in Afghanistan. And here's what we're doing. We actually are taking some of our resources and we are putting those resources directly into their ministry of defense and their ministry of interior.

And we are having them understand how you build a requirement that says, I need something; how do you then build a budget associated with it; then how do you generate a contract for that; how do you validate that it's a good contract and it's not just, hey, it's my brother.

Then, when you get the material, how do you ensure that that material that you get is appropriate -- and especially on the pharmaceuticals, we're really making sure they understand that process. And then how do you take that product that you just procured, that you've tested and you've certified, and how do you get it out to the field that you need to get it to?

Another area is we're -- when I say a challenge -- we are paying 47 percent of the salaries associated with the Afghan army. We pay, through a Law and Order Trust Fund that is made up of many nations, to include the United States -- the salaries for the Afghan police are paid through the LOFTA trust fund, as they call it. What we're trying to do is ensure that you actually get your pay.

So this is where literacy actually becomes important. Fourteen percent of this country is illiterate -- actually, 14 percent of this country is literate; 86 percent is illiterate because of the fact that they didn't have anybody going through school. So now we have about 8 million people in the pipeline in different levels in schools, so at some point in the future, our literacy program should be able to diminish while the schools pick up their responsibility and start generating educated individuals to come into the police and the army.

But why is literacy important? It's important because when you're out there as an army recruit and we tell you to go load four rounds and you don't know what four is, it makes for a difficult time. If you're a policeman and you're out on a patrol and we tell you to go read an ID or to look for a -- you know, even read your serial number off your weapon for accountability or tell you to go look for this license plate and you don't have any numeracy or literacy, then we have a challenge.

So we've got a literacy program in place where, in their basic training, they start with literacy training. And it costs us about $39 for the individuals to be in the training. So we can get you to a 1st-grade level, typically, coming out of basic training or your police training. So why -- going back to accountability, the other part of that is, if you don't know how to count, you don't know how much money you're supposed to receive for your paycheck.

So the first thing we wanted to do was get cash off the battlefield, or out of the process. So what we've done is we've set it up that the almost -- I think we're up to about 90 percent of all the soldiers and almost 90 percent of the policemen are now getting an electronic fund transfer to a bank.

Now, that is a second challenge because now you've got to have a bank nearby. So there's actually a process that's been set up that -- almost everybody has a cell phone -- and you can get a text message that is a certified text message saying that you have received this amount of cash in your bank account.

You go to, basically, a money guy and this money guy will give you the amount of cash that you have certified in your bank and then he turns around -- and we've got it all set up electronically -- so then he turns around and is able to withdraw your money, based on the fact that there's a code authorization and all these other things.

But we're now having people get, actually, their salaries that they're earning. And before, we gave people cash. You'd go out and cash could be ciphered -- or not ciphered but siphoned -- off as it was being delivered down to the individual because it would show up in a big, bulk sum and then as it went down the food chain, it could be siphoned off. So that's what we're trying to do. We're trying to ensure that there's no -- you know, what I tell everybody is the gazintas going in on the top match the amount coming out the bottom.

And we're making sure that when we have contracts, there's sufficiency of evidence that the contract was let appropriately -- meaning that there was competition -- that the amount that was requested or authorized was actually paid and you didn't pay more and then get less. I mean, we have a lot of auditing in this process, overall.

But literacy has been important because now people can see how much they're getting paid. You know, literacy is important because now you can have them actually be a patrolman and know what their job is and actually be able to perform the rule of law by interviews and other things that they need to do. So I think that was a kind of a long answer to your short question, but hopefully I did hit your question in that process. Q: Thank you very much, sir. That was great.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Gail?

Q: Admiral, thanks for taking the time to spend with us today. Gail Harris with the Foreign Policy Association. And the question I have is kind of related to the financial oversight.

I was looking at the July report that the inspector general put out, specifically the sentence where it says, "While U.S. agencies have taken steps to strengthen their oversight over U.S. funds blowing through the Afghan economy, they still have limited visibility over the circulation of these funds, leaving them vulnerable to fraud or diversion to insurgents." I was wondering what your thoughts were on that.

GEN. FULLER: Well, I think, yes, I know what report you're talking about. I think there's a couple things. One part of the report was saying we do have a lot of contractors on the battlefield and for a lot of different reasons. They are assisting us in inspecting the police at the police training sites.

We are trying to move away from having contractors do that, and we've gone to the international community and we've actually had about 500 policemen from the international community come in and support. But what we try to do is we try to train a policeman and then get that policeman out there, and then you have them out into their various stations and districts, et cetera, and we want someone to go out and inspect them.

So we don't have enough policemen and we can't use just military policemen, so we use contractors. And these are typically former policemen. So we have the contractors going out there, and one of the parts of the report was saying, you didn't provide appropriate oversight of these contractors to ensure that they were doing their job. Well, we have changed that and we now are ensuring that the contractors that we have in the battle space have oversight, have an individual that knows what the contract says and knows what they're supposed to be doing.

The second piece of that goes back to the only cash that we are injecting into -- directly into the ministry of finance that goes down to the ministry of defense and the ministry of interior is the money that we are injecting, and we have oversight because we watch every project. We

know exactly what the vouchers were for. We track that very carefully. It gets more challenging when, for example, we hire a contractor to go and build a building and then, in the process of getting their materials, they have to make a payoff for a different reason. And we're trying to -- I tell you, we're trying to stamp that out wherever we can find it. There's actually a whole organization within our next-higher headquarters, which is the ISAF headquarters, and they have a whole anti-corruption task force that's looking at, to move trucks on the road, does a trucking company have to pay a tariff to, you know, go through a particular area, otherwise the trucks are going to be attacked?

So we're trying to attack this in any way we can. So that's where, I think, that report -- can it happen? Yes. Yes, we can pay a contractor to do something, pay him a fair value, and in the process of them being able to perform that contract, such as moving trucks on the road, they might have to pay money to somebody to ensure that the trucks don't get damaged coming across the road, and that money could then go back to support the insurgency through the Taliban or whoever.

So we're trying to manage that and we're trying to have them come forward when they have that type of challenge, and we're trying to address it. It's an interesting culture, here, and we're trying to address that. I hope I answered your question appropriately.

Q: Yes, you did, General. Sorry for calling you an admiral. My back is out and they've got me on some pretty powerful meds for the pain. But again, thank you for your answer.

GEN. FULLER: No problem.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And John Reid (sp), you are next.

Q: General, could you elaborate a little bit more on how you're trying to address the culture of corruption there because, I mean, we know that in a lot of cases, it is a way of doing things in a lot of countries around the world, not just Afghanistan. But how do you keep things moving smoothly, but at the same time try to stamp out corruption for the exact reason that some of that money can go to the Taliban, et cetera?

GEN. FULLER: OK. Well, I brought up one about the pay. Another one was when we started building the army and the police force, a private got paid more than a basic patrolman; matter of fact, they got paid considerably more. So a basic patrolman who initially didn't get a lot of training, was put out on a checkpoint and they would shake down individuals because that's how they had to make their money. They didn't get a standard-of-living wage.

So the first thing we did was we did pay reform on that level and ensured that there's parity between the army and the police for the basic skills and the basic ranks. That was the first thing we were trying to do. So now you're not out there shaking down people. The second thing was educating them that that is not a good thing to be shaking down your populace -- regardless of how, you know, beneficial it

might be to you directly. It's very destabilizing when people come through a checkpoint and they feel like they're going to get shaken down. So we really are working at that. Another piece is even though they are a sovereign country and we are here to assist them, we put a lot of pressure on their government at a lot of different levels when we identify an individual that we do not believe they possess the correct leadership qualities. And it could be associated with, we think that they're corrupt and there's evidence of it or we just think that they're a poor leader.

So we put a lot of pressure on their government to say, I think you ought to deal with this individual. And it becomes challenging because this is a tribal country, a lot of different tribes and they have a lot of history associated with who they are and what they've done.

And we try to ensure -- that's actually one of the things that we do within both the army and the police -- we try to ensure that the percentage that's across the country of these different tribes is represented inside the military and the police, and we try to recruit to ensure that it has that -- that you don't get one tribe dominant in an area.

Now, with the police, we don't work as much on tribes because of the fact that you typically are getting recruited out of an area and staying in that area and that's your tribe. And so it's a lot different. The army, we're trying to make much more homogenous.

So we're trying to do a lot of different things. But we put a lot of pressure on the government. We bring it all the way up to their president when we believe that there are leaders that they have that are either corrupt or are setting very bad leadership examples, and they should not be leading these individuals because we keep on telling people, you could give this country all the latest, modern technology and if they have poor leaders, it's not going to work. They are not going to be able to provide the security to their populace and defend their borders. So we are really focusing an awful lot on leadership. And they grew up, for the last 30 years, under the Soviet model, which is predominantly senior leaders.

So there's a lot of senior leaders running around here and we're trying to now build up a basic soldiers, non-commissioned officers -- so you have non-commissioned officer leaders and then we have the officers, instead of just -- they just used to have recruits and officers -- and the same thing on the police side.

So now we're trying to build this infrastructure that says you need that backbone of your army and your police force, which are your non-commissioned officers. And they get paid more. We require a higher education level for them. They, at the minimum, have to have a 3rd-grade education, which is the international standard for literacy. So we're trying to do a lot more than just, you know, give them equipment. Hopefully, that answered your question. Q: Again, can you describe any more -- in better detail any of the levers that you can kind of pull on

when you are putting pressure on Afghan leadership when you sense corruption?

GEN. FULLER: When we sense corruption, we gather the facts and we bring it to their leadership and we identify, here is a -- you know, you need to do your own due diligence as a nation because you are sovereign, but this is the information we have. And I would say we're probably batting around 50 percent. We aren't -- you know, probably for baseball, that's probably OK, but we're not -- the tribalism still -- you know, who knows who still is a powerful factor and we are just constantly chipping at it, saying, look, I understand. Same tribe, you know -- you've got the secret handshakes. But you have a major challenge here that you need to work on.

And as I said, this is managed at every level, not just within NTM-A but inside of IJC, which is -- NTM-A is the -- we're like the builders. We're the trainers and the builders, and we generate the force and then we provide it to the ISAF -- excuse me, IJC stands for the ISAF Joint Command. And I call them the kinetic guys, so they're the ones that are in charge of all the coalition forces here that are doing fighting with the Afghans.

So we generate force, give it to those guys. They mentor, train and then they say, hey, you're in charge of this area. So we're putting -- we're identifying it at our level. They're identifying it at their level -- IJC is. And then our higher headquarters is ISAF, the International Security Assistance Force. And General Allen is the general in charge of ISAF, and it's brought up to his level and he brings it up to the president.

And we're really trying to have them understand that you need to have a professional organization, and a bad apple can ruin a lot of -- you know, it can cause attrition problems. And attrition problems actually generate cost challenges because you have to rebuy and retrain the individual, meaning -- not rebuy; you don't buy the people -- but when you recruit them, you've got to train them and educate them and everything else. And if you lose that resource because of bad leadership, that's a valuable resource. How's that?

Q: It's great. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Karen Francis?

Q: Sir, thank you for your time. And I know exactly what time it is over there because my husband is there and I just talked to him. But this line is a whole lot better than the line I just tried to talk to him on. My question is about the Afghan women-owned business program.
GEN. FULLER: Mm-hmm. (In agreement.)

Q: Can you give me some details on that? I write for Care2 and they're very interested in knowing about the program and if there's any assistance that anyone back here can give to the Afghan women- owned business program.

GEN. FULLER: You bring up a good question. It's more than just Afghan women-owned businesses. Yes, we are looking for that type of business. As I said, we're having the Afghans make their own uniforms or have companies here that make their own uniforms, et cetera.

One of the companies that we got into business with was an Afghan-owned, Afghan woman-owned and all the employees are Afghan women. And it's actually a pretty interesting company when we went and looked at them because, one, they're doing a very good job. And to help them with that, we brought in our defense contract audit agency that came over and helped them understand, how do you build quality into the product so you don't inspect quality at the end but you actually build it into the product?

So we really helped the company -- we've been doing that with all the companies -- but we helped this company. What I found really interesting with this company, though, was that they had women-only workers but they provided more than just a place for them to work. They set up a health-care system for the women. They set up a child development center for the women, so they had their kids there and the kids -- they actually had a food program there also.

Afghanistan -- a lot of individuals in Afghanistan are probably one step away from malnutrition. They just don't have a diet that really supports them really well in many areas. So they set up a nutrition program for the women. They set up an education program, a health-care system. It was really pretty fascinating to see when we went over there.

Now, another area that we're really focusing is trying to get more women to come into the military and into the police force. And there were some cultural barriers, but we keep on reinforcing to anybody that doesn't think women should be involved in any of the security forces that it's written in their constitution, women's equality. So we are working very hard at that, doing a lot of recruiting for women.

Matter of fact, we have the first four women pilots back in training in the United States. And -- (chuckles) -- it was actually kind of ironic, but there was so much interest being generated of these four women pilots that were back in the United States for training that we started to actually impact their ability to successfully complete the course. So we told everybody, you've got to stop harassing them. Everybody wanted to interview them. But we're trying to have more women come in, more women serve, more women have opportunities because they're getting education opportunities just like the males. They're also seeing that there is a potential that they can learn a skill that they can apply and use outside of the security forces. So we really are trying to have the Afghans understand, you have a percentage of women. You need to have them be involved in this nation and not just stay at home. And given them opportunities. And I think it's working out very well.

I don't see a lot of resistance when I go around. We did have some issues where we had to make sure that you segregated them and you made sure that you watched out and that, you know, you didn't -- you had to -- I came in the Army in 1980 and women were just really starting to

become -- come into the military. The first class at West Point was 1980, for example.

So I went through this on the Army side and saw what was going on, and I think we're trying to apply some of those lessons on, don't have the women show up trying to be better than men. Have women be women, and have them do a good job, whether or not they're a man or a woman. Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, and knowing the cultural biases in that part of the world, that's -- (chuckles) -- you're kind of pushing a big rock up a hill. Can I ask one more question? What is this women's-only group building? What do they make?

GEN. FULLER: They make -- they're making sleeping bags, pillows, sheets. What else were they making in that factory? They made what we call organizational clothing and individual equipment. So there's a lot of different kit that you receive and they were making all these different components, which -- the other thing we're trying to do with these companies -- and this company, in particular, is being targeted for this also -- are there commercial opportunities for the products that you make?

Now, we don't want individual companies to be making uniforms and then sell the uniforms out on the open market. That would create a big challenge when someone is wearing a uniform and comes up to a checkpoint. We don't want that. But what we do -- if you're making sheets then, you know, a white sheet is a white sheet. I don't care if you sell it on the commercial market. And we're trying to have them understand that there's commercial opportunities.

And there's a couple of other companies that are making, for example, rucksacks and backpacks and things, and they're actually teaming up with a U.S. company to actually start manufacturing here. And they're not looking for cheaper labor; they're really looking for closer to the markets that they're trying to -- you know, the far east markets they're trying to get into. And it's the shipping costs that would really be reduced if they built it here in Afghanistan.

Q: Thank you. GEN. FULLER: OK.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Troy, are you still on the line -- Troy Steward?

Q: Yeah, I sure am, yeah.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: OK.

Q: OK. Hey, sir, Troy Steward from (name of website deleted.

) I kind of had one question, but many of the folks really hit on the corruption piece and I think your hands are pretty tied there. So let me ask you this. A lot of these projects, a lot of the industry and

infrastructure stuff you're doing seems to be -- or will probably benefit big companies or, really, companies around Kabul.

And I'm wondering, what is your approach -- what are you doing to reach out -- because, you know, everyone else outside of Kabul in Afghanistan pretty much feels excluded from the government and their country. They live under that tribal lifestyle. But what are you doing to reach out to build the infrastructure and build the road system so these makers of goods throughout the country have a way to get their -- whatever they make to other communities?

Because, you know, if they only have 50 families in their village, that's all they can really sell to and some of them don't even have the means to go five miles down the road to a bigger village. Is there anything being done to really build the commerce infrastructure within the country, which, personally, I think is the key to kick-starting this whole piece of it for Afghanistan because they're so secluded?

GEN. FULLER: OK. I fully understand the question and I've got a couple different things about that. Agree -- this country, an awful lot, is Kabul-focused and Kabul-centric, and we're trying to address that. And for example, when we're now looking at construction builds, we're going to a new build out in the west, in the Herat area, where we're calling it adobe build.

Adobe build is the way that they actually build out there in the west. They build walls that are about 18 inches thick. They're mud-coated. The guys can fix them really fast and things like that when, you know, they get damaged or whatever. So we're trying to have local builders actually do that.

The challenge you have is, do you have the skillset you need to make sure that they wire it up appropriately so you don't electrocute somebody in the end state? But we've gone from just having big, international companies come in and build to go to companies that were registered out of Kabul, to now trying to get local businesses to actually build and use local supplies as much as possible. And the adobe build out in the west is an example. So we're trying to get away from Kabul-centric. The other thing was, I just went out yesterday to Herat, and I talked to the provincial governor. They have a lot of opportunities there, and they could be a much larger agricultural center, for example, and an exporter of agriculture. And they're close to the Iranian border, so they could even export into Iran. But as you said, one of the things we're trying to do is have a road go actually all the way around Afghanistan.

And there's a road -- the portion of the road that's missing -- if you look at a circle, it's basically from 10 o'clock to about 12 o'clock, so it's from the northwest to the north. And it's up in the Badghis area. So what we're trying to do there is not us build a road, per se, but we're trying to have the international contributors assist in building a road.

So we want to get the road up there because Herat then could start exporting their goods, primarily in agriculture, initially, up into the north area so they get up into the Mes area, et cetera. But you need, like you said, an infrastructure to be able to get it across, and it is kind of tough up there. They have a huge mountain pass that they have to get through. But hey, that's what engineers do. They like to build challenging things.

The other piece of this is Herat also has some light industry. They build a little three-wheeler buggy type thing and they export it an awful lot down into the south and southwest -- the Kandahar and the Helmand area. And they can't really get it up to the north because -- and they know they would have a market there because they don't have a road. So we're really trying to get the road going into that area. So going out of Herat, they actually had a lot of opportunity and they see the growth, and they're now trying to synchronize that.

When I talk about countries -- I probably should have prefaced this earlier -- there are 35 contributing countries right now that are providing forces. So for example, we just got the El Salvadorians in. They sent in a contingent. What they are doing is they are helping us train the MI-17 pilots that are going to be in the Afghan air force.

Now, you want to talk about a challenge: All instructions in aircraft are done at the international standard level, which is English is used in the cockpit. So we have to find Spanish-speaking, Dari-speaking, English-speaking individuals because you can't put three or two people into the -- two additional people in the cockpit. It's just too crowded and it wouldn't work. So that was our biggest challenge.

When the El Salvadorians said, hey, we're going to volunteer to help train some Afghan pilots, we needed to go find some multilingual individuals. But there's 35 countries providing direct contributions in terms of forces. So there are police forces and pilot trainers -- for example, I just said about El Salvador. There's 49 countries that are contributing, overall. One of the major contributors, actually, is Japan. They're putting an awful lot of money into the economy here -- through us because they contribute into our fund and then we, in turn, distribute it. But they're paying an awful lot for pharmaceuticals, medical equipment, literacy. The Japanese are actually doing quite a bit in this country.

So there's a -- we're trying to have other countries help build the road, for example, besides the U.S. government either through USAID or through the U.S. military or coalition NATO operations. So we're trying to have other countries assist. India is up there, as a matter of fact, trying to help them with a big dam that was built a long time ago. Actually, I think the original dam was built in the '50s through USAID.

And they're trying to upgrade the dam to provide that irrigation support out to areas such as Herat so then they could have an increase in their agricultural capability because they have the appropriate water that they need. There's one thing about this country I've realized: They actually have a lot of water in this country.

You don't have to dig a well too deep before you run into water. And even down in the southwest and the south-southwest, down in Helmand and Kandahar area, the water table is only about eight feet below the surface. So there's actually a lot of water here, and we're trying to get them to grow something.

I mean, we've actually looked at having them grow quinoa. It grows very well in this type of environment. And, you know, it was really funny the first time that it got presented at a meeting. General Petraeus was here at the time and he said, quinoa, like, what the heck is that? But it's a fast-growing cash crop. You know, I've eaten it before. It's a grain, I guess, technically. It's like a rice, almost. But it's actually a very expensive one so they could get a good -- a cash return on this very fast-growing crop. So does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, sir, it does. That's good, thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Sir, thank you very much. I think we're pretty much running out of time, here. So I'd like to thank everybody for your questions, also. Do you have any closing comments you'd like to make today, sir?

GEN. FULLER: Sure. Again, I appreciate having the opportunity to talk to you. And for the individual whose husband is over here, it's 19:41 right now, and on the East Coast, it's 11:11. So yes, we are focused right now on how do we build the most capable and professional Afghan-right security force. So we are trying to ensure that they understand how to take care of this national treasure that we are providing them because it is part of our national treasure. We're trying to ensure that we provide them the appropriate national treasure. They do not need -- you know, every now and then, I'll hear the comment when I'm talking to a senior leader here that, they said that we need tanks and jets. I said, you can't afford that. And what we have to think about is, how do you afford this? Because in the future, I don't believe the U.S. government is going to be really interested in paying a really high sustainment cost because we gave you tanks and jets. And they're very expensive to operate.

So they're starting to understand what's appropriate for this country.

Because if you have to spend all your cash just to keep and sustain your military force, then what about the schools? Well, we have, like, 8 million kids in schools and I understand there's like 2.3 million girls in the schools right now.

And matter of fact, when we were coming out of Herat yesterday, school let out and it was a girls' school, and I almost had the vehicle stop so the PAO could take a picture because that's what we're trying to do, is have every kid have an opportunity. And if we have them spend all their available cash on maintaining this big force that we could

potentially put here, they're not going to be able to afford schools. They're not going to be able to afford the medical care.

So we're trying to be really good stewards of your tax dollars and my tax dollars and ensure that we do the right thing for Afghanistan and give them the capability that they need for this country and professionalize them at the same time -- have them understand that you need to be a professional army and you need to have a professional police force. So I appreciate having the opportunity to talk to you. I look forward to talking to you in the future. And hopefully, we can do another roundtable.

Q: Sir, this is John Reid. Can I ask one follow-up question based on what you just said?

GEN. FULLER: Sure.

Q: When you say you can't afford tanks and fast jets, that reminded me of the buildup of the Afghan air corps. Where is that with regard to the purchasing light attack planes, that kind of thing?

GEN. FULLER: Sure, I'll answer that. So the end state for the Afghan air force right now is going to be 145 aircraft. It's going to be a combination of the Mi-17s, which are being used for all sorts of things. They are weaponized so they can do close air support for their forces in contact, but they also do medevac. Matter of fact, they're doing medevacs now with their own air force.

They're going to have 20 C-27 Alphas, which are an aircraft that the Italian government provided and we're refurbishing it. It's like a mini-C-130. And they have asked for the C-130 and we said, you can't afford an expensive aircraft. And the C-130 Juliet, which is the aircraft they would have received would have been very expensive.

And they have asked for fighter jets -- F-16s, specifically. And we're instead going to provide them a close-air support turboprop aircraft, and it's in source selection right now with the U.S. Air Force. The U.S. Air Force is going to buy that same aircraft. And when the U.S. Air Force decides what aircraft they are going to procure, we will buy the same aircraft. So sometime in November, they should complete that source selection and we'll start fielding them in about the 2014-'15 time period.

They're going to still have some Hind-D aircraft from when the Soviets were here. They have 35 of those, and they'll have 54 of the Mi-17s and they'll have 35 -- excuse me, no, I don't think it's 35. Let me back up. Let me just get the number. Off the top of my head, I don't remember how many Mi-35s they're going to have, but it's a small number. It's like 20, maybe 17.

We're going to give them some Cessnas. And initially, they were like Cessnas? You've got to be kidding me. Well, actually, Cessnas are very good aircraft to learn how to train on a fixed-wing aircraft before you start flying the C-27 Alphas. And also, they can use it as a

transport aircraft. And so now they're starting to come to the realization, wow, maybe that's actually a good aircraft. Sure, it's a very good aircraft.

We're going to give them some small Bell helicopters -- actually, sorry, McDonnell Douglas helicopters. So we have some small, light helicopters that they will have to train them on helicopters before they go into the Mi-17 or into their Hind-Ds. So we are on the glide path -- the army will be completely built by November of '12. The police force will be completely built by November of '12.

And the air force takes longer. One, you have a longer throughput time because of pilots and, two, we're still procuring aircraft. So they're going to be completed in about the '14, '15 time period. So what will happen is, we will have them as a force while the coalition is doing a surge recovery and also a restructured mission because, as you know, the president of the United States said that we really are going to have to transition in the 2014 time period. And we're looking at that as 31 December, 2014. So we're really focusing on ensuring that the Afghan police and air force and army are prepared to lead the mission.

And as I said, it's not just building a force, but they have to know how to sustain it and maintain it. They have to have a medical system, and we're focusing an awful lot on their medical system to ensure they're able to do that. They have to also have the infrastructure there so they have the ability to bed down and locate and operate from their bases and posts and security checkpoints, et cetera. So a lot of moving pieces happening all at the same time. Does that answer your question?
Q: It does. Are you giving them any ISR capability?

GEN. FULLER: No, and the reason for that is they couldn't afford it. There's a big infrastructure associated with ISR. That goes back to Afghan-right, Afghan-first, Afghan-like. This is the Afghan-right.

This is where they have to negotiate with the U.S. government and other countries to say, I still need some additional capability. Can you provide that for me? Instead of buying jet aircraft, why don't they negotiate with us and other countries to have us provide some air support that's located here on a temporary basis or a rotational basis? So I think we're probably getting the hook.

Q: Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Roger that, sir. And I'd like to thank everybody on the line once again for your participation today, for your questions from the bloggers and also for your time from the major general.

Today's program will be available online at dodlive.mil, where you'll be able to access a story based on today's call along with source documents, such as the audio file and print transcript. Again, thank you

again, Major General Fuller, and thank you to our blogger participants. This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time.

END.